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BRUSH AND PENCIL

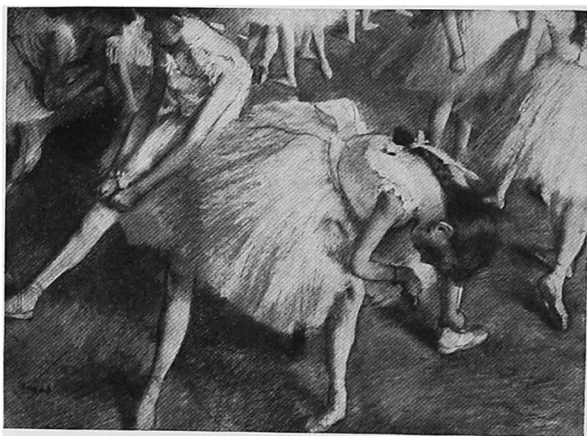
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MANET, DEGAS, AND RENOIR: IMPRESSIONIST FIGURE-PAINTERS

It is rare, of course, for any painter of importance to be exclusively a figure-painter, or exclusively a painter of landscape; and not even the three artists named in the caption of this article, who in their labors lately shown at the Grafton Galleries have most dealt with the figure, have confined themselves altogether to its record. Looming largely in the work of all three painters — Manet, Degas, and Renoir — it is in the work of Degas that the figure's place is most of all conspicuous. It is only when Degas paints bonnet-shops or paints a race-course



DANSEUSES
By Edgar Degas

that the figure, though it may not be the exclusive subject, is not the main motive of the piece. Figure-painting is his special forte.

Degas is a great draftsman; for it is to be remembered that the expression of movement is as truly a function and a part of draftsmanship as the expression of permanent form. To his form, exception is taken, not so much, it is true, on account of incorrectness or inadequacy, as on account of the so frequent ugliness of the selected model. The spectacle of the models of this keen observer and brilliant executant is indeed, at times, not agreeable. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the artist himself remains in ignorance of the fact. In choosing, he has chosen, no doubt, what gave him salient character or salient movement. His woman with the absinthe is so horribly true that it is at least a lesson in human degradation—even a sermon, and preached as forcibly as in any picture of

Bega's or Brouwer's. His laundry-women reveal the conditions of labor not at all with the charm of Morland, but with nothing less than the truth of Millet. His dancing girls, at their rehearsals, possess for him no glamour of the theater. The most experienced of his *coryphées* are deformed by monstrous exercise; and the least expert have the immaturity of youth and the awkwardness of the beginner. But the expression of their movement—rapid and unwonted, or if not unwonted often incidental—engages his hand and mind.



PÊCHEUSE
By P. A. Renoir

Pastels showed it at the Grafton Galleries. But best of all was it shown there by the extraordinary little canvas "Rehearsal in the Foyer de la Danse," wherein, with the inevitable *gaucherie*, there is set down, besides, the scarcely less inevitable human grace. Whether we enjoy the theme or whether we dislike it, this picture is only to be spoken of with fairness when it has been acclaimed as a masterpiece. The cold, gray light of the Paris winter day streams through the tall windows. The illumination, in its breadth and subtlety, would have done no discredit to Van der Meer. And then there is the action of the scampering, or stalking, or pirouetting crowd. Elsewhere—in one or two milliner pieces particularly—pieces in which he has recorded the familiar charm of modes and fabrics in the well-stocked shop—Degas is a colorist. Here, in "The Rehearsal," he is content to be a draftsman. "Horses in the Meadows" exhibited, —shall we say?—is an interlude of harmonious beauty. "Carriage at the Races" has a realism more finished than was ever Mr. Frith's—and a sense of style, withal, of which

Mr. Frith did not wot. Then there was "The Races: Before the Start." Draftsmanship again. The horses are drawn as finely and decisively as on a Greek bas-relief, or as in that perfect lithograph of Whistler's, "Smith's Yard, Lyme Regis." A superb achievement.

That certainty of execution which is a characteristic of Degas is very far from being a characteristic of Renoir. Inequality, indeed—I express here opinions voiced in the London press at the time of the exhibition—is the mark of this artist. By him, material for the scoffer has been provided in abundance, for he has offered us piece after piece of trivial character and thin, discordant color. But then, remember he has not omitted, either, to accomplish, here and there, some miracle of *finesse* that could be set, with little loss, beside a performance of Gainsborough. "The Ballet Girl,"



LE BUVEUR D'EAU
By Edouard Manet

shown at the Grafton Galleries, is such a piece. Is there anything better than that, in the record of the wreathed smile and weariness and capering grace of "Madame Bacelli," by the English Vandyke—transformed, for the moment, into the English Lancet? Not Gainsborough-like at all—more positive, more solid—is the better of Renoir's two records of people in a box at the theater—we mean the picture which is the less known of the two, somehow, the sister and little sister, with the bouquet between them. A good many failures might be condoned—they exist to be condoned—in virtue of a performance so *mouvementé* and so vivid as "A Lunch after Rowing," another of the pictures exhibited. Such pictures command unqualified admiration.

But if inequality is a mark of Renoir, so, too, is variety. His

"Sleeping Woman with a Cat" is drawn and modeled with very remarkable firmness. And the "most fast sleep" of Shakespeare was seldom better indicated. His "Head of a Woman" has not only the life in the eye which is so characteristic of every Renoir face-study, but also pure and admirable flesh painting—another charm alto-



LE LINGE
By Edouard Manet

gether. But this does not exhaust his versatility. His "The Seine at Argenteuil" is a bold, subtle picture of waters and blue skies and gold-white sails. His "Farm on the Banks of the Seine" is a homely, most realistic, most original landscape, of water, palings, ducks, stream-side greenery, and vibrating light. And in his little still-life piece—of green figs principally—there is placed veritably before us the fruit, luscious yet cooling, from some garden of France.

And this brings us to Manet. For one of Manet's triumphs in the ex-

hibition, too—though a conventional judgment would reckon it a minor one—was in a still-life canvas of such limited inches, yet in effect with much of the breadth and much of the richness of Chardin. This was "Peaches and Green Almonds." As in a work of Chardin—as in no work of William Hunt—the fruit in this picture is bathed in atmosphere; the texture is but the matter of the thing; air and light are its spirit. Yet no one was more positive than Manet—in a sense, no one more materialist. He was not seen perhaps quite so well as were Degas and Renoir, in Monsieur Durand-Ruel's exhibition. "Le Bon Bock" was not here—the picture that was promptly "secured"—it is a word dear to the picture seller—by the famous singer, Monsieur Faure. "Bar at the Folies Bergères"

—which figures, if we remember, in the book upon Manet by that writer who is the great authority upon the painter (M. Théodore Duret, the critic *d'avant garde*)—was represented at the Grafton Galleries only by a sketch for it—a sketch not at all of the most engaging. Nor was there at the Grafton Galleries that admirably recorded episode of nineteenth-century history which contributed its share, at least, of interest to an early “International.” Yet there were admirable things.

The early and especially Spanish manner of a painter upon whom Velasquez and Goya both set a mark was represented in “Spanish Dancers,” in “The Bull-Fight,” and in “The Wandering Musicians.” The two latter are perhaps more remarkable than the first: the “Wandering Musicians” for character, for fearless treatment of the type, for treatment deeply true; the “Bull Fight” for its dramatic possibilities—the eager crowd, half frenzied, ranged along the ring, and the splendid carriage of the actors in the arena—to Madrid or Andalusia is one at once taken. Very personal, though wrought with unusual detail, was “The Garden of Manet,”—green, sunny, pleasant, with the traveling light of a fortunate day over every yard of the ground. “Afternoon Music: Tuileries Gardens,” with the tall silk hats and the crinolines of the middle of the second empire, and with some of the affectations left, almost of D’Orsay’s grace, was not a poem indeed, but a “document.” The grouping is amazing in naturalness. In the depth of the shadows cast, or supposed to be cast, by summer trees of France, the Spanish influence is ap-



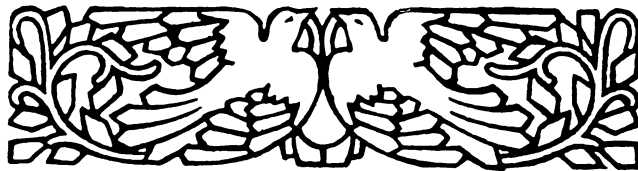
MARCHANDE D'ORANGES
By P. A. Renoir



LA SERRE
By Edouard Manet

parent still. The "Port of Arcachon," is another of the canvases displayed, shows Manet himself, entirely—himself, and a pioneer. The lowness of tone, that is so modern, is there, and the breadth and the simplicity—the fact stated and left, not worried and labored. Manet, like Boudin and like Courbet, was not strictly an "impressionist"; or being an impressionist in some degree, he was, so to put it, of an early generation. His talent, after all, like Boudin's talent, was eminently personal. Yet, like Boudin, he passed on to other hands the torch that he received or the torch he lit.

FREDERICK WEDMORE.



AMERICAN WATER-COLORS IN ENGLAND

Robert Burns's "O wad some Power the giftie gie us to see oursel as ithers see us!" is no less applicable to art than to the more mundane incident of which the poet wrote. The recent exhibition of American water-colors in England was a new venture on the part of our native artists, and a decided novelty to their British confrères. The show provoked comment and comparison, and it is both interesting and instructive to note the impression made and the judgments expressed—judgments possibly doubly valuable as being from a foreign standpoint.

For the proper understanding of what London said about the New York Water-Color Club's first exhibition in England, it is necessary to give some idea of certain local conditions. England, not altogether without reason, looks upon herself as the home of painting



LES COURSES
By Edgar Degas

in water-colors, and especially of a form of water-color painting which is here called legitimate, or pure. Purity in this sense involves the use of transparent color, and the strict avoidance of Chinese white, tempera or body-color of any kind. Now, many members of the New York Water-Color Club are addicted to the use of body-color. If they wish to get an effect by means of body-color they have the temerity to try, and often the audacity to succeed.

It is true that many of the younger water-colorists in London depart in little fashion from tradition, but this is still thought illegitimate by the greater number of those who are interested in art, whether as painters, writers, purchasers, or simple spectators. Although a self-evident absurdity, it is nevertheless a fact; and it is not only in England that you find to-day forms of art in which the means are thought, in one sense, of more importance than the end.

Another point is, that the modern gallery in which the exhibition was held was recently moved; and again, the standard of its exhibitions has recently changed. True, it was in New Bond Street before, but now it is in another part of New Bond Street; and even though the new premises were better and the new standard was better, it must be remembered that England is a conservative nation, predisposed to look upon any change with disfavor, simply because it is a change.



LA RÉPÉTITION DU BALLET
By Edgar Degas



BALLET ESPAGNOL
By Edouard Manet

Moreover, New Bond Street and the West End generally are usually full of exhibitions. You need hardly cross the street to see an exhibition, and many of them are excellent, many old favorites, and many widely advertised. The writers on art have too much to do. It seems likely, as Rodin suggested, that London is becoming the center of the art world. As such it is naturally crowded, and this in itself, apart from all other conditions, is a reason why newcomers should have much difficulty in finding favor.

Thus to say that the first exhibition of the New York Water-Color Club was favorably received really means more than the words would seem to imply. The nature of the reception can probably be best shown by quoting some press opinions cabled to this country, without attempting to select the most flattering or to avoid those which are least so.

The Times was somewhat patronizing. After recognizing that the club was "an institution of respectable age," it called the show "rather interesting." It should be said that very interesting shows are often beneath the notice of the Times. Mr. Hallowell's sketches for altarpieces, "designs in the manner of the sixteenth century," were "rather striking in design and effective in color." Colin Campbell Cooper's views of modern Philadelphia "showed a rare power of getting poetry out of prose." Arthur I. Keller was "remarkable for

his grasp of character and for his expression of it." Emma Lampert Cooper and Albert Herter also met with the approval of the Times.

The Morning Post, a paper of much influence and high standing, opined that the club "certainly produces good work," and after mentioning a dozen members specially, called the whole "an interesting display."



JEUNE FILLE AU PANIER
By P. A. Renoir

The Daily Mail, which has a larger circulation than any other daily in London, said that "the hundred odd drawings are of high all-round excellence, and in most cases treated with considerable freedom and freshness, and with a notable absence of stippling." Here, and in several other papers, mention was made of "brilliant still-life studies by different artists who need not fear comparison with our best exponents of this unjustly despised class of subject."

According to the Daily Express, the display was "of singular interest,

both as regards the excellent quality of the work and the originality of the subjects." The Court Journal thought it "more than satisfactory to find the New York Water-Color Club holding an exhibition in London," held that the show "gives great promise for the future of American art and artists," and hoped that it would meet with "sufficient appreciation to induce our American cousins to hold an annual exhibition in London."

The Builder considered it "a very interesting exhibition, but not what we should call a water-color exhibition." The reason is, of course, the frequent use of body-color, and this was referred to in other papers. But the Builder perceived "a high standard of excel-

lence of its kind," mentioned "some powerful figure pictures," and said that the still-life subjects were "all good"—which is saying much.

The foregoing are typical of a score of notices which appeared in the London press, and there seemed to be few if any of the exhibitors who were not mentioned by some paper. Mr. Cooper's sky-scrapers were mentioned as often as anything, and the work of Edward Potthast was sympathetically noticed—though not to the exclusion of many others. The funniest notice—not meant so, of course—appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, explaining that "the intensely prosaic life of America no doubt predisposes her artists to mysticism by a natural reaction from the anti-artistic conditions of their environment. It is at any rate noteworthy that several of the chief figure pieces are charged with the same strange romantic sentiment that characterizes so many painters of the Old World, like Rossetti or Burne-Jones, Mareau or Bocklin. Mr. Albert Herter's 'Spirit of the Renaissance,' for example, and Miss Clara Parrish's 'When It was yet Dark'—a graceful picture of the holy women going to the sepulcher on the resurrection morning—are designed in that modern Mediæval manner which one had thought to be a distinction of European art. Several other clever drawings show with equal clearness the effect of Parisian training. . . . The American note is struck for once in a rather hard picture of a nude Indian boy 'Roasting Corn.'" "Struck for once" will seem to readers somewhat amusing.

Against this discovery of the American note, however, must be

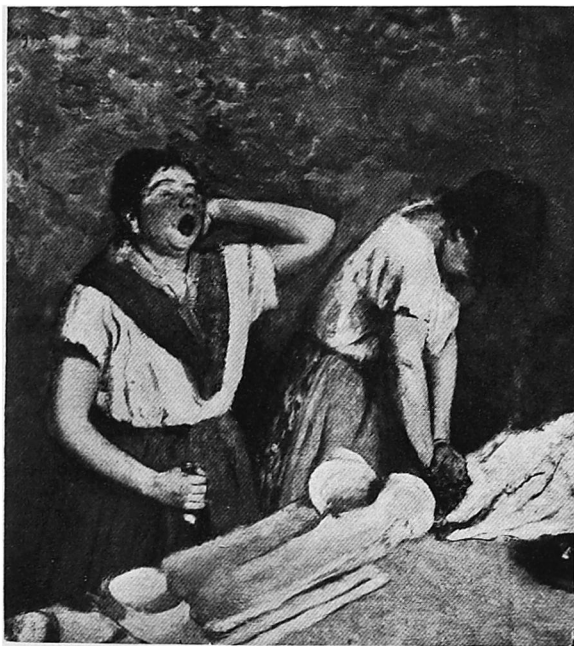


MARCHANDE D'ORANGES
By P. A. Renoir

set off the fact that the Daily Chronicle did not fail to see Mr. Moser's "Adirondacks," which was described as a "romantic impression." E. Irving Couse was the painter of "the American note." Elsewhere his picture was spoken of as "ably modeled."

An English water-colorist, successful at all the leading exhibitions, when asked for an opinion, proved to have been very much inter-

ested in the work from New York, and had much to say of its technical ability and freedom from conventionality. Some of the painters specially mentioned were Charles Warren Eaton, Henry B. Snell, Walter L. Palmer, Luis Mora, Rhoda Holmes Nicholls, Anna Fisher, Jules Guerin, Childe Hassam, and again Mr. Cooper, Mr. Keller, and Mr. Moser. The influence of Bastien Lepage was noticed in "Late Afternoon," by August Tranzer. John La Farge was thought poorly rep-



LES DEUX BLANCHISSEUSES
By Edgar Degas

resented in this exhibition. The rich coloring and ingenious composition of Mr. Hallowell were spoken of, and it was also pointed out that the prices asked were, as a rule, from twenty to fifty per cent higher than those which Londoners would be likely to expect. For this reason it was not thought likely that the sales would be at all satisfactory. Good modern work can be bought in London at very moderate rates.

L. C. HADDON.

